

# IRANO-JUDAICA IV

STUDIES RELATING TO  
JEWISH CONTACTS WITH  
PERSIAN CULTURE  
THROUGHOUT THE AGES

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JERUSALEM 1999

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## Introduction

The present volume contains many of the papers read at the third colloquium on the subject of Irano-Judaica held in Jerusalem from 3–6 July 1994. The actual meetings were held for the most part in the guest-house of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, where the guests from abroad were staying, and where they could enjoy, at a short distance from the centre of Jerusalem, a pastoral environment and facilities that only such a holiday resort can offer.

As usual in this series of conferences, no central theme was imposed. The aim was to try and cover a wide range of topics within the general heading of the series, treating the subject matter of "Irano-Judaica" as broadly and as liberally as desired, the Iranian part covering anything Jewish that has to do with Iran, and the Jewish part defined as incorporating Semitic elements in general, with even casual references to Aramaic or Judaism regarded as sufficient excuse for inclusion in the conference. There were nevertheless some papers that had to be omitted. Among these was an interesting paper by Farrokh Vajifdar, entitled "The Vendidad Ascendancy and Decline", which concentrated on internal issues within the Zoroastrian community, and the paper by Pallan R. Ichaporia, that deals with the legendary history contained in an Avestan hymn had to be abridged, especially since much of its contents had already been published elsewhere. A paper by a prominent Tajik scholar, Ahror Mukhtarov, on "The Jews of Bukhara in the *Tārīkh-i Manāzil-i Bukhārā* and *Tārīkh-i Nāfi'ī*", and a paper by an important Russian archaeologist, Boris J. Stavisky, on "The Jews in Pre-Islamic Middle (former Central) Asia" presented too many technical problems and had regrettably to be left out. Other papers that were read at the conference but do not appear in the present volume are by J. W. Boyd with R. G. Williams, Haideh Sahim, Martin Schwartz, and Michael Zand, as well as the late J. C. Greenfield. My own article on the early Jewish-Persian texts from the Geniza has also been left out for two good reasons: to leave room to others, and because research on the Geniza texts in early Judaeo-Persian has not yet been concluded, and it does not seem appropriate to publish partial results at this stage.

The aim of the following remarks is to give an impression of the main themes treated, sometimes accompanied by additional comments.



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In the paper by P.O. Skjærvø, "Avestan Quotations in Old Persian?" the question of whether there is a connection between the Old Persian inscriptions and the Zoroastrian scriptures is examined. The question is interesting for a variety of reasons. It is related to the historical problem of whether the Achaemenid kings and their followers were Zoroastrian. If they were, one must assume that they were aware of the Zoroastrian literature. It is also interesting from the point of view of the poetics of the inscriptions of the Achaemenian kings: what was the framework of their cultural references? The author, in discussing the problem, collects material to show that the Old Persian inscriptions use some common themes and *topoi* of kings' pronouncements that had been used over and over again in the ancient Near East, and one finds oneself in a quandry in trying to define what might have been Iranian, as opposed to the common Near Eastern heritage, in the Old Persian inscriptions. One of the most important cultural encounters in the world of antiquity in the Near East is that between Semitic and non-Semitic, in the first place Iranian, culture. "Irano-Judaica" for our purposes includes the whole area of contact between Iranians and Semites — for example, in the linguistic field, between Aramaic and Iranian. Viewed from this perspective, Skjærvø's article is important for any discussion of Irano-Judaica, although it has little direct bearing on the Jewish component of this contact.

The author amasses an impressive range of quotations and references to show the possibility that the writers of the Old Persian inscriptions were aware of certain phrases or themes that occur in the Avesta. Some of these correspondences, as the author is the first to admit, are quite commonplace, involving expressions that occur spontaneously in various cultures without the need to assume dependence or contact; some are common to the mentality of the ancient Near East; others seem to be typical of the heritage of Indo-European poetical or royal phraseology.

Old Persian and Avestan are two separate languages, and the difference between the Old Persian inscriptions and the Avestan phrases is, according to the author, often superficial, each using words available in its own language, while the themes, considered to be the deep structure, may be identical. One may however mildly object by saying that in the case of a sacred scripture one may expect to find some verbal influence in the language of worshippers using a different vernacular.

The theme of protecting the weak and the poor from the wrongdoings of the rich, and from favoritism for the rich by the authorities, is quite widespread, and is attested in the Avesta as well as in the Old Persian inscriptions, cf. K. Barr, "Avestan *dregu-*, *drighu-*", *Studia orientalia Ioanni Pedersen septuagenario ... dicata*, Copenhagen, 1953, pp. 21–40. The novelty of the Old Persian inscriptions consists in the insistence on a kind of symmetry: not only an avoidance of favouring the rich against the poor, but also avoiding doing the opposite thing, although one can hardly speak, I think, of a concern "to protect the interests of the mighty against wrong-doing by the weak". The special veneration of the poor in ancient Near Eastern cultures, notably in Jewish and Christian texts and later also in Islam, where "poor" became synonymous with "modest, humble" and even with



"righteous", is well known, and the Iranian texts shared in the same perception. In the Sasanian period, one of the instances where this attitude is most forcefully manifest is the widespread epithet of judges, "Protector of the Poor" (*driyōšān jādag-gōw*). It is perhaps against this background that the need may have been felt to protect the mighty from the favor that judges and rulers would tend to show to the poor (cf. Ex. 23:3). This idea is so widespread that it makes the connection between Old Persian and Avestan somewhat less meaningful.

A remarkable parallel between Old Persian terminology and that of the Avesta concerns the Old Persian formula that expresses the wish that the person should be happy while alive and a follower of *arta* when dead. The Avestan formula is roughly the opposite: the person shall be a follower of *aša* while alive, and shall partake in the Good Existence when dead. The contrast is marked and probably not fortuitous. If there is a quotation here, it seems to be polemical. The Avestan phrase uses clear religious concepts for both states, while the Old Persian relegates the unequivocal religious concept to the state of the person after death. It is the merit of this study that it does not seek to assert dependence, but only to explore its possibility and its implications.

The next group of articles is devoted to questions of influence and borrowing between Iran and Judaism. The paper by Ph. Gignoux, "Monotheism or Polytheism in the Gathic Revelation?" tackles one of the oldest and most often debated questions in the history of research into Zoroastrianism: how is the message of Zoroaster to be interpreted, is it monotheistic or polytheistic? And one may add here, with Gignoux, is it dualistic?

Gignoux gives a short history of the discussion of this problem, mentioning the main protagonists of the chief views. He himself tends to assert the chronological primacy of Israelite monotheism, by invoking recent research on the archives of Mari. In discussing this problem, Gignoux goes into the question of how one should interpret the proper names that consist of two divine names juxtaposed, the *dvandva* compounds, and suggests that they may be treated in the same way as the compound personal names are understood in Semitic, that is, as short nominal phrases, although one difficulty here is the fact that this is not a usual construction of compounds in Indo-European. Another difficulty, raised by Gignoux himself, is the fact that sometimes the two terms of the compound seem to be near synonyms.

Whether Zoroaster's message in the Gathas deserves to be called monotheism, on this question Gignoux is less decisive; but he seems to be sympathetic to the view that there is a gradual inclination towards monotheism in Iranian history. If I may express a personal opinion here, I would say that it is true that at a certain point in the religious history of the Middle East the ancient polytheistic religions give way to various forms of monotheism, whether it is a strict faith in a single god, or a mitigated form of monotheistic faith. I also believe that in this development dualism is one of the expressions of this monotheistic tendency, and it was most characteristic of Iranian culture. Gignoux's paper draws attention to these parallels between Israelite and Iranian religious history.

The study by Almut Hintze, "The Saviour and the Dragon in Iranian and Jewish/Christian Eschatology", examines closely the possible links between the main



eschatological ideas that sprang in the post-exilic period in Judaism with the corresponding notions in the Zoroastrian writings. The author could draw on her own thorough treatment of the main Avestan text that deals with eschatology, Yašt 19, known as Zamyād Yašt, which is the subject of a book that she wrote. Particular attention is devoted to the complex of eschatological stories connected with the figure of the dragon in early Christian writings, which, as the author points out, show striking similarities with the Zoroastrian stories around the figure of Aži Dahāka (Pahlavi Azdahāg), the Avestan dragon. She cautiously concludes that there is a good chance that the eschatological complex centered on the struggle with the dragon figure should be one of the components that might have influenced the Jewish and Christian ideas of eschatology.

**Maria Macuch**, in her paper "Iranian Legal Terminology in the Babylonian Talmud in the Light of Sasanian Jurisprudence", discusses some terms occurring in the Babylonian Talmud which are with some certainty borrowings from Sasanian legal terminology. She quotes two terms that have already been explained by previous research: *mwhrqy w'bwrgny*, explained for the first time by Bernhard Geiger as meaning "reliable, or authentic, contracts", and *pursišn-nāmag*. Professor Macuch, who has made Sasanian law her special domain, supplies information as to how these terms are used in Iranian judicial literature.

**K. D. Irani**, a philosopher and a Zoroastrian, discusses in his article "Transformation in Forms of Religiosity in the Ancient Iranian Jewish traditions" similarities and contrasts between the two religions, Zoroastrianism and Judaism, from the standpoint of religious typology. He uses for his typology a terminology such as archaic religion, ancient organized religion, and reflective religion; or, in a different classification, a religion with a strong tribal consciousness as against an individualistic, and therefore universal, religion. The author then points out some paradoxes that exist. Zoroastrianism, an individualistic religion according to the author, developed as a religion with a strong sense of tribalism; being reflective, it nevertheless developed a strong ritual element, in contrast to the spirit of the original scriptures. These are thoughtful points, although it is certainly open to debate whether the labels used by the author are entirely justifiable, and, if they are, whether they necessarily exclude each other.

Another contribution from the point of view of a member of the Zoroastrian faith, the paper by **Pallan R. Ichaporia** on "The legendary history of Iran in the religio-historical account of the Zamyād Yašt (Yt. 19)", discusses the mythology of Zoroastrianism, taking as its point of departure the mythical allusions in the 19th Yašt of the Avesta. Observations as to the dating and the classification of the Yašts are included in this paper. Various other aspects of the mythology incorporated in Yašt 19 are discussed in detail in the book by Helmut Humbach and Pallan R. Ichaporia, *Zamyād Yašt*, Wiesbaden 1998, and it seemed unnecessary to reproduce those points in this paper.

From the rich mythology and eschatology of the Armenian epic of Sasun, **James R. Russell** quotes in his article on "Iran and Israel in the Armenian epic of Sasun" echoes of Iranian traditions that were merged with biblical associations to form a complex of ideas, aspirations, and yearnings. His wide-ranging knowledge of both



Armenian and Iranian sources, and, in addition, his thorough acquaintance with Jewish and Christian themes, makes this an impressive display of erudition and insights.

**Dan Shapira**, in his article "Manichaios, Jywndg Gryw and Other Manichæan Terms and Titles", proposes a new interpretation for the name of Mani as transmitted in the Greek sources, Manichaios, by regarding it as a literal translation of the self-designation of Mani in the Iranian sources: Parthian *Žiwandag Grīw* or Middle Persian *Grīw Zīndag*, "the Living Self". According to Shapira, this word can be explained on the basis of the Mandāic *mana*, which, in addition to the meanings that the word has in Jewish Aramaic and Syriac, "vessel", "garment", and "boat", it also designates "intelligence" or "mind".

It is impossible to do justice to this article, packed as it is with suggestions and associations, in the space of such a short summary. Some of these ideas certainly seem to convince; while others may need further reflection. The wealth of references and connections is undoubtedly overwhelming.

One of the vexing problems in the study of Middle Iranian writing systems, most of which use the Aramaic script, consists in the fact that it is difficult to account for the reason for these bizarre systems coming into existence and persisting for a long stretch of several centuries. In fact, the writing of Pahlavi, for example, can be regarded as a puzzling regression from an alphabetic system — that of Aramaic — to a much more archaic system of representing whole words through sequences of signs that carry little significance to the readers of the language. In these languages the words are represented either through their phonetic value, rendered directly by the Aramaic alphabet, or through corresponding Aramaic words, which make little sense to the users of the script in the late periods, who have to memorize the shape of the Aramaic words and exchange them in reading with their Iranian equivalents. The Aramaic ideograms have two peculiarities which help them convey the meanings required. They very often have forms that are unusual for Aramaic, containing elements that make them hardly recognizable to readers of Aramaic; and they are in many cases supplied with letters that indicate Iranian morphological elements that should be applied to the basic form of the Iranian word alluded to by the Aramaic ideogram.

In the paper "Iranian heterography and Aramaic: some reflections" **Wojciech Skalmowski** discusses two interconnected questions relating to the use of the Aramaic ideograms. One concerns the reason for their use, and the other deals with the meaning of the term *uzwārišn*, which came to be applied to this method of writing. He takes his cue from an article published by Christopher Toll in 1990, pointing out the explanatory function of the structure of many ideograms. Their composition is more or less meaningless in terms of Aramaic, but verbs or prepositions have a certain uniformity of structure that makes them intelligible and immediately recognizable in the eyes of someone who is familiar with the Iranian heterographic writing system. This insight is combined by Skalmowski with the wording used by Ibn al-Nadīm in the *Fihrist*, where the writing system of Pahlavi is described in terms that according to Skalmowski indicate that the system was devised as a pedagogic effort at giving a linguistic analysis to the structure of



the Iranian language. This could be best done, according to the author, by using the Aramaic words in the peculiar form that they assumed in the heterographic system.

There is indeed no doubt that the forms of the Aramaic words show elements of a linguistic analysis of the Persian words for which they stand, and that the system as such has instructive value. This may be one important reason why this system was not discarded much earlier than it actually was. And yet one may be entitled at this stage to entertain a certain amount of hesitation as to whether this was the reason why this system came into being. We do have the earlier stages of this system, for example in Parthian and Sogdian, where it is clear that the uniformity of morphological forms, e.g. as concerns the distinction between verbs and substantive, is not pronounced. If the history of the system is a guide to its teleology, it seems that the evolutionary process assumed by Henning serves quite well to explain how it came into being. The ultimate shape the system took in Pahlavi, especially in Book Pahlavi, does however support to some extent the theory favoured by Skalmowski that it was devised to have a didactic function. This observation may suggest a measure of conscious levelling down of forms by analogy so as to achieve a didactic result, which would make it possible to identify morphological segments of words. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the analogical process was not carried out with any measure of consistency, and that there are forms that do not conform to the theory propounded by Toll and Skalmowski.

The history of the study of Persian in Europe and of its grammatical description holds an interest not only for linguists or for specialists in Iranian. This is part of the intellectual history of Europe and as such is a fascinating topic of research. The connection, discussed in the paper by **Éva M. Jeremiás**, "The Impact of Semitic Linguistics on the First Persian Grammars Written in Europe", between the study of Persian and the study of Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic, that was carried out before it, is illuminating for understanding how the notions of grammatical categories were crystallized and got their definition as the awareness of linguistic structure and of the genetic affinities between languages grew.

Another facet of the history of the European awareness of Persian and of Persian studies in Europe has a close connection to Judeo-Persian literature. The earliest publication in Europe of an extensive Persian text is the Judeo-Persian translation of the Pentateuch included in the polyglot edition of the Bible printed in Constantinople in 1546, an edition that contained, besides the Hebrew original, also Arabic, Aramaic and Persian versions, the last attributed to Jacob ben Joseph Tawus. **Paola Orsatti**, in "The Judeo-Persian Pentateuch of Constantinople and the beginnings of Persian linguistic studies in Europe", shows how this edition of the Bible spread in the centers of learning in Europe and had an impact on the study of Persia and on the composition of Persian lexica in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

It may seem surprising, as **Robert Brody** notes in his article "Zoroastrian Themes in Geonic responsa", that there is little reference to Zoroastrianism in the Geonic literature of the sixth to the eleventh century CE. When one recalls, however, that



the extensive Talmudic literature, which largely reflects Jewish productivity during the Sasanian period, contains only scanty references to the state religion of the period, most of these references being quite obscure, the neglect of overt mention of Zoroastrianism in the subsequent period, which largely fell under Muslim rule, is somewhat less striking.

In the responsa of some prominent Geonim the author has found commentaries to obscure references in the Talmud concerning Zoroastrian practices, and tries to reconstruct the meaning of the terminology. Even more instructively, he can differentiate between the responsa of different Geonim, probably dependent on the degree of their closeness, chronological or otherwise, to the Sasanian period, as to how familiar they were with Zoroastrian customs.

In his comments on the state of our knowledge of the classical Judeo-Persian literature, **Amnon Netzer**, "Notes and observations concerning Šāhīn's birthplace", deplores the fact that too little of that literature has so far been published in a critical and scholarly manner, a fact that hampers our ability to evaluate this literature appropriately. The author himself has done more than anyone else to promote these studies, not least by publishing his comprehensive catalogue of the Judeo-Persian manuscripts in the library of the Ben-Zvi Institute, a work which is much more than a catalogue of a manuscript collection, and can be regarded as the most thorough presentation of Judeo-Persian literature.

By examining the linguistic peculiarities and the allusions to realia in the poetry of Šāhīn, the author manages to cast doubt on the commonly accepted notion that Šāhīn was from Shiraz and to make a strong case for his origins in the north-eastern regions of Iran.

The practice of adducing scriptural arguments against the other religion is widespread in both Jewish and Muslim mediaeval literature. **Vera B. Moreen**, in her article "Polemical Use of the Qur'ān in Two Judeo-Persian Texts", discusses two interesting cases of Jewish apologetical argument against Islam by using quotations from the Qur'ān.

Following a distinguished list of publications in which **Herbert H. Paper** made known to the world of learning several Judeo-Persian versions of the Pentateuch and of some other books of the Bible (a list is given at the end of his article), he describes in his present contribution, "A Judeo-Persian Bible Lexicon: British Library MS 10556", some features of the Judeo-Persian Bible versions and reproduces a portion from a manuscript kept at the British Library (BL) in London which contains an explanation in Judeo-Persian of difficult words in the different books of the Hebrew Bible. He does not try to place the composition in time or place, but some of the peculiarities of this manuscript seem to make it possible to define it perhaps more closely (e.g. the Arabic-Persian word *xidmat*, pronounced in late centuries in most dialects *xizmat*, is here written *xtmt*, presumable indicating a pronunciation *xitmat*, *xithmat* or the like).

Among the other versions that are given for comparison in the short section used by Professor Paper as an example, it seems that this composition is closest to the Ben Zvi Institute (BZ) manuscript 1028 (compare, e.g., Hebrew *navi*, rendered only in BL and in BZ by *kalime-či*; Hebrew *agam* = *āb-ambār*; Hebrew *šefardea* ')



=*vazaq*). The closeness of the two versions may indicate a common dialect, or a common school of tradition, and in both cases it makes it likely that both come from the same geographical environment.

The tractate Abot in the Mishna, a piece of religious wisdom literature, containing mostly aphorisms reported in the name of many prominent sages, has enjoyed great popularity in traditional Jewish life in most communities, and the Judeo-Persian community is no exception. The article by **David Yeroushalmi**, "The Mishnaic tractate Abot in Judeo-Persian literature", is dedicated to a discussion of the different translations, paraphrases and commentaries on this text in Judeo-Persian, and gives a useful survey of the Jewish Persian treatments of this tractate, with a classification of styles and modes of treatment.

One of the articles devoted to themes in art history in this volume deals with what may be regarded as an example of popular Jewish art in Iran. The object of the article by **Raya Shani**, "A Judeo-Persian Talismanic textile", is a piece of textile of recent fabrication (possibly nineteenth or twentieth century), painted with Hebrew and Judeo-Persian writing and numerous figurative themes. This is undoubtedly an Irano-Jewish artifact, made for the purposes of providing magical protection to the owner, and most likely in particular for easy and safe childbirth and for love. The author analyzes the motifs on the cloth and adduces numerous parallels from Jewish and Islamic sources for explaining the complex of figures and symbols on the textile piece.

Two contributions approach the vexing problems of the interpretation of the Dura Europos synagogue paintings from opposing points of view. In her analysis of some of the iconography of the synagogue at Dura Europos, **Dalia Levit-Tawil**, in the article "Queen Esther at Dura: Her Imagery in the Light of Third-Century CE Oriental Syncretism" the author identifies the representation of Queen Esther with that of a famous Roman empress of the late second century CE, Julia Domna. The Syrian wife of Septimus Severus, she became the object of divine reverence, and may have been regarded as a suitable model for a woman from a different ethnic background who reached the highest position in the realm.

**Bernard Goldman**, in "The Iranian Element in the Dura Synagogue Murals", presents a sober and rather skeptical survey of the different trends in the interpretation of the Dura synagogue. He argues against the assumption that there was a philosopher at work dictating the contents of the pictorial representations, and for characterizing the style of the paintings not as Iranian or Greco-Roman, but rather as international.

The article by **Simon Hopkins**, "The Neo-Aramaic Dialects of Iran", is a very instructive and thorough presentation of the various Aramaic dialects still spoken, or until recently spoken, on Iranian soil. The author divides these neo-Aramaic dialects into four groups, according to denomination, whether they are Jewish or Christian, and according to geography, whether they are used in the area of Azerbaijan or Kurdistan, the proximity of Turkish or Kurdish respectively leaving its mark on the languages in question.

Along with data on the languages, we are also given information concerning the history of their research. The presentation concludes with some examples of



the more distinctive features of some of these languages and with notes on the possible history of these communal languages before modern times. Their relationship with Iranian languages is also briefly discussed, with the issue of influence of one group on the other mentioned but put aside in favour of the notion of a Sprachbund, of a whole group of languages developing alongside each other while they share certain characteristic features.

The long coexistence of Jews and Zoroastrians in Mesopotamia during the Sasanian period should have left its mark on the main literary monument of Jewish Babylonia, the Talmud, and yet it is not easy to find obvious traces of the awareness of Zoroastrianism in the Talmud. Eli Ahdut, the author of the last article in the volume, "Jewish-Zoroastrian polemics in the Babylonian Talmud", written in Hebrew, has set himself the delicate task of trying to uncover signs of religious confrontation with Zoroastrians in the Babylonian Talmud. Ahdut first establishes a classification of religious polemics on the basis of a contrast between overt and covert arguments, the latter often expressed in internal compositions, intended for members of one's own community, as well as between regular, official, public arguments, and those that are held *ad hoc*.

A passage in Bavli Sanhedrin 46b puts in the mouth of King Shabur a question addressed to Rav Hama as to the scriptural basis for burial in Judaism. This passage raises several literary and historical questions. The author tends to place the episode in the time Shabur I, and interprets the king's question against the background of the Zoroastrian aversion to burial, an issue that is alluded to in other passages of the Talmud (Yevamot 63b; Bava Batra 58a). The king's question, if the episode is historical, may serve as evidence that he was aware of the Jewish reliance on scripture, a characteristic shared also by Zoroastrians.

Another passage adduced by the author, Sanhedrin 39a, recounts how an *amguša* (a Zoroastrian priest, probably a *mōbed*) explained to the Jewish sage Amemar, who flourished in the early fourth century CE, at the time of Yazdigerd I, some of the tenets of his religion: "From your waist upwards, (your body) is the domain of Hormiz; from your waist downwards, it is the domain of Ahurmiz". The names of the two powers, Ohrmazd and Ahreman, were corrupted in this tradition to Hormiz and Ahurmiz. Amemar then asked the Zoroastrian priest: "If so, how does Ahurmiz [=Ahreman] allow Hormiz [=Ohrmazd] to make water flow through his territory?", alluding sarcastically to the paradox of how pure, sacred water, is taken in by the person and then discharged as urine from the lower half of the body (a question that could be formulated with regard to Ohrmazd as well as with regard to Ahreman). Ahdut connects the position expressed by the priest to what we read in the composition *Gujastag Abālish*, where the *kustīg*, the ritual belt worn by Zoroastrians, is said to mark the dividing line between the upper, Ohrmazdian half of the body, and the lower, Ahremanian, half. Again we are faced with the question whether this story can be taken to reflect an actual historical event. The author believes that it may very well be authentic.

In some of the passages where an argument over religious matters takes place the non-Jewish protagonist is called *min* ("sectarian, heretic"). This is usually taken by scholars to refer to a Christian, but Ahdut argues that in some cases the



designation may also include Zoroastrians. This may be the case, according to him, in an argument between a *min* and Rav Kahana (Sanhedrin 37a) over the segregation of a menstrual woman from her husband, which, according to the *min*, should be stricter than that practised by Jews. The concern about menstrual pollution is more typical of a Zoroastrian than of a Christian. In Sanhedrin 38b an argument between Rav Idit (or Idi) and a *min* is reported. The claim of the *min* is that the wording of Ex. 24:1: "And he said unto Moses, come up to the Lord" suggests that, since God seems to be speaking and yet he refers to himself as the Lord, that there are two persons there. One of these two persons is stated to be Metatron, who shares God's name. The issue is that of a plurality of divine entities, as against strict monotheism. It is possible, according to Ahdut, to assume that the attitude of the *min* is that of a Zoroastrian, rather than of a Christian.

As an example for a covert argument with Zoroastrianism, Ahdut quotes a passage in Yevamot 97b, where various combinations of partly absurd situations of kinship are mentioned. A woman says of someone that he is both her brother and her son; this is explained as the result of a man begetting a son from his daughter. Other, more far-fetched, kinship situations are mentioned as riddles to be solved. The background to these riddles, Ahdut explains, is the situation of *xwēdodah*, the next-of-kin marriage enjoined by Zoroastrianism. Although there is no direct confrontation here, the tone of irony embedded in these riddles suggests a situation of argument. In a commentary on Jer. 2:10-13 in Ta'anit 5b it is said that the Kutheans worship fire and the Kedarites worship water. Ahdut maintains that the Zoroastrian veneration of fire and water is here transformed by making two ancient mythological peoples venerate the two elements.

While some of these interpretations are by their nature speculative, given the opaqueness of many of the Talmudic passages, it is clear that not all the references in the Talmud to the state religion of the Sasanians have yet been exposed, and that further investigation of such allusions may yield important and useful historical material.

The themes covered in this volume occupy a long history of some 2,500 years, and a large number of disciplines and approaches, and the field is still far from being exhausted. The next volume, number 5 in the series, is close to publication, and it may be hoped that it will appear before long.

Shaul Shaked

## The Saviour and the Dragon in Iranian and Jewish/Christian Eschatology

ALMUT HINTZE

### 1. Scope of this Article

In<sup>1</sup> Zoroastrian as well as in Jewish eschatology of the Hellenistic–Roman period there are two figures which have certain traits in common: the Iranian Saošyant and the Jewish Messiah. Each of them is believed to usher in a new age of eternal bliss in which Evil is totally eliminated. However, the problem with comparing the ideas conveyed by the two terms is that each of them is deeply rooted in its own religious system within which it has its own particular history. Nevertheless, both figures share certain characteristic features, and it has been asked with some justification whether these common traits are due to an interreligious influence.<sup>2</sup> If such an influence may be assumed, the direction is quite clear: it is from Iran to Israel, for in the course of time the Jewish notion of the Messiah acquires a semantic component characteristic of the Iranian Saošyant, that is to say the eschatological.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows I want to consider again the development of the notion of the “saviour” in Jewish and Zoroastrian tradition and then to draw a parallel between the formulation of the myth connected with this figure in Jewish/Christian and Zoroastrian tradition.

### 2. The National and Political Messiah of the Old Testament

The Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ *māšîaḥ*, literally meaning the “Anointed One,” is an

- 1 For their helpful comments on various aspects of this article I should like to thank Professor Rainer Kampling (Berlin), Professor Maria Macuch (Berlin), and Professor Mary Boyce (London).
- 2 References to earlier studies, including divergent views, are given by Hinnells, *Numen* 16, 1969, 161f. fn.3.
- 3 See Hinnells, *Numen* 16, 1969, 161–185 and *JCOI* 45, 1976, 4.



elliptical expression of *māšîah YHWH*, "Yahweh's Anointed"<sup>4</sup> and implies that the king of Israel has been elected by Yahweh to rule over his people. As the "Anointed One" the king was meant to be in a close relationship with Yahweh. In particular, Israelite kings were considered "Yahweh's anointed" in the Old Testament.

The catastrophe of 587 B.C.E., which brought an end to the monarchy of Judah, the destruction of the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jewish upper class to Babylonia, entailed a novel use of the expression "Yahweh's Anointed". Having previously been employed only of Israelite kings, after the monarchy it is applied by Deutero-Isaiah, somewhat unexpectedly, to the foreign Persian king Cyrus (Isa. 45.1). Cyrus is thus presented as being elected by Yahweh in order to serve his plan for Israel "though thou hast not known me" (Isa. 45.4):<sup>5</sup> Cyrus delivers Israel from the exile. Cyrus is hailed by Deutero-Isaiah as "an anointed deliverer of the Jewish nation,"<sup>6</sup> for it was he who allowed the Jews to return home and rebuild their temple. With regard to possible interreligious influence these actions by Cyrus were important in so far as a basically friendly attitude towards each other, which may well have resulted from Cyrus' politics, is the ideal precondition for an exchange of ideas<sup>7</sup>.

In the post-exilic texts of the Old Testament *māšîah* is used as a title of honour for the High Priest<sup>8</sup>. With reference to kings, Deutero-Isaiah's articulation of a future hope for restoration initiates the notion of the Messiah as a future saviour and king of his people, but without yet presenting a true eschatology: "What does begin to take place in Deutero-Isaiah is the severance of the future hope from historical reality."<sup>9</sup> The Messiah gradually becomes the central figure of a future

4 The Old Testament attestations are listed by Seybold, In: G.J. Botterweck, et al. (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol.5, Stuttgart 1986, 53; Hesse, In: G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol.9, Stuttgart 1973, 491ff.

5 K. Elliger, *Deuterjesaja I* (40,1–45,7), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 491f. J.J.M. Roberts, in: Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, 1992, 40 writes: "Cyrus, however, is assigned a role as an agent of salvation for God's people. This is quite compatible with Israelite expectations for their own native kings, and Isaiah's oracle concerning Cyrus could be seen as modelled on Israelite coronation oracles." Seybold, *ThWbAT* 5, 1986, 57 remarks: "DtJes. handhabt den alten Würdetitel mit großer Freiheit und Kühnheit"; similarly Hesse, *ThWbNT* 9, 1973, 494. On the relationship between Cyrus and the Jews cf. Ben-Gurion, *Commémoration Cyrus I* 1974, 127–134; Netzer, *Commémoration Cyrus II* 1974, 35–52.

6 Boyce, *History* II 44.

7 Cf. on this and on the affinity between Jewish and Iranian religion, Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 481f., and Boyce, *History* II 44–48. Hinnells, *JCOI* 45, 1976, 2 writes that "whereas there are many cases of Jewish propaganda against the various nations, against Babylon, Greece and Rome, there is not one single case of a Biblical or rabbinic text decrying the Achaemenids or their successors the Parthians. Iran, therefore, holds a unique place in Jewish history, a position from which it is possible that she could have influenced her western subjects." Cf. also the remarks by Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 1979, 516f.

8 Seybold, *ThWbAT* 5, 1986, 53.

9 Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* 153f.



hope which is directed towards the restoration of the Davidic kingship with all its positive consequences for Israel's nation. This development is a logical consequence of the historical situation, since there is no longer a king of Israel. For a short time these hopes seem to reach fulfilment when Zerubbabel, a descendant of David's family, becomes governor of Judah. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah praise him as the king in whom "the house of David will be restored in its ancient glory,"<sup>10</sup> and with whom Yahweh's promises about the restoration of Israel and a time of bliss would be fulfilled. But after Zerubbabel disappears<sup>11</sup> these hopes are shattered and so they "deliberately look forward to a future not yet at hand."<sup>12</sup> Probably from this point onwards the Jewish expectations of restoration and the Messiah, in addition to their national and political aspects, gradually start to acquire an eschatological element which pushes the hope for the ideal king forward to an indefinite time in the future. The Messiah becomes "the ideal king entirely transferred to the future, no longer identified with the specific historical king, but with one who, one day, will come," as Mowinckel has described this future hope.<sup>13</sup> In the Old Testament the term "Messiah" always denotes the "Anointed One" as a political and national ruler. In its eschatological sense, the term *māšîaḥ* does not occur in the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament.

It is in the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism that an eschatological use of "Messiah" is attested. In Jewish apocalyptic circles of the Intertestamental Period of the Second Temple (about 220 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.) the idea of a Messiah becomes eschatological. However, such an idea is not a uniform one.<sup>14</sup> In the 2nd century

10 Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* 119, cf. Fohrer, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 85, 1960, 406, 414f.

11 Cf. on this Talmon in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, 1992, 97–98; Roberts, *ibid.* 49–50.

12 Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* 156.

13 Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* 123, 156. Cf. Fohrer, *Geschichte Israels* 204. On the development of the Messianic idea in the Old Testament from a present to a future messianism in the preapocalyptic period cf. also Moenikes, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 4, 1988, 289–306. Talmon in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, 1992, 82 has described the development of the messianic idea in early Judaism in the following way: "The unfolding of the messianic idea in early Judaism from the earthly figure of an anointed king, the historical *māšîaḥ*, to the vision of a unique superterrestrial savior who will arise in an undeterminably distant future — may be seen, *grosso modo*, as a developmental process in three stages: it proceeds from the *historical realism* which prevailed in the age of the monarchies, to a *conceptualization* in the Second Temple Period, and it culminates in the *idealization* of the anointed after 70 C.E., i.e. in the Christian era, when "the Messiah" is center stage as the inaugurator of the final and unending era of universal salvation."

14 Cf. Lichtenberger in Stegemann (ed.), *Messias-Vorstellungen bei Juden und Christen*, 1993, 9–20, and Werblowsky, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* vol.9, 1987, 472–3: "The messianic doctrines were of diverse kind, reflecting the mentality and spiritual preoccupations of different circles. They ranged from this-worldly, political expectations — the breaking of the yoke of foreign rule, the restoration of the Davidic dynasty (the messianic king), and, after 70 C.E., also the ingathering of the exiles and the rebuilding of the Temple — to more apocalyptic conceptions, such as the spectacular and catastrophic end of "this age" (including a day of Judgement), the ushering in of a new age, the advent of a kingdom of heaven, the resurrection of the dead, a new heaven and a new earth."

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c.e. the development towards an eschatological notion of Messiah may have been facilitated by the historical event of the defeat and death of Shimon Bar Kokhba, who had been hailed as the Messiah during his lifetime.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Relation between a Dualistic View of the World and Eschatology

It is generally agreed that the Israelites took both the idea of kingship, i.e. of having an earthly ruler, and the practice of anointing the king from the surrounding peoples in Canaan.<sup>16</sup> By the same token, we may wonder whether Israel may have changed their concept of a political and national Messiah into that of an eschatological and universal Messiah under foreign influence.

If such was the case, the most likely candidate for the origin of this idea would obviously be Iran under the Achaemenians and their successors.

For the eschatological Messiah is not the only idea which corresponds to an Iranian concept. Jewish eschatology also contains other elements which are found in the Iranian religion: the Jewish hope for the future king became eschatological when it was linked with a dualistic view of the world,<sup>17</sup> and such a view is a characteristic of Zoroastrianism. It is in the course of the Hellenistic period that a dualistic view of the world is worked out in Jewish circles.<sup>18</sup> With regard to the Iranian Mazdayasnian religion, I use the term "dualism" in the rather loose sense that basically there are two separate cosmic powers, but not two gods.<sup>19</sup> Thus Mazdayasnianism is not a genuinely dualistic religion although undoubtedly it has certain dualistic traits, because Ahura Mazdā is not believed to have created evil.

Jewish religious people have well noticed this difference from their own religion, and Deutero-Isaiah has stressed the Jewish view when he says that Yahweh is the creator of all, good and evil (Is.45.7). With respect to creation, the Mazdayasnian

15 For sources and discussion of the messianic movement related to Shimon Bar Kokhba cf. P. Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand*. Tübingen 1981, 55–67 (Texte und Studien zum Judentum 1); *Geschichte der Juden in der Antike*, Stuttgart 1983, 163–165.

16 Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* 5f.; F. Hesse, *ThWbNT* vol.9, 1973, 486, 488. Also Hittite (Kutsch, *BZAW* 87, 1963) and Egyptian (R. de Vaux 1964) origins have been proposed, cf. Seybold, *ThWbAT* vol.5, 1986, 50. On the significance of anointing see Talmon in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, 1992, 87–90.

17 Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* 263.

18 One of the earliest attestations of dualistic ideas is found in the Sadoquite Amramapocryphon dating from the first half of the second century B.C.E., see Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 548–550. On the Jewish handling of the question of evil see Boyce, *History* III 419f.

19 A lucid exposition of the relation between "dualism" and "monotheism" is given by Sh. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 1994, esp. 21–26. He describes the difference between monotheism and dualism as "one of degree, of intensity, of emphasis, not of substance"; cf. also Sh. Shaked, *Cambridge History of Judaism* I 315f., who states that in the Zoroastrian literature probably developed during the Sasanian period the dualistic antagonism between Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu is not based on equality.



dualistic view of two opposing powers did not influence Judaism; but with respect to the necessity of fighting the evil powers, it did. Dualism requires an eschatology, because, in the end, Evil must be annihilated by Good, if God is to save his creation. Consequently Mazdayasnianism has an eschatology, and in Judaism eschatology starts to develop at the time when it comes into contact with Mazdayasnianism.<sup>20</sup> This process has been described by Shaul Shaked in the following way: "... certain eschatological themes were partly available in biblical verses which could be developed in an eschatological sense; and thus the process must have been one by which an existing tradition was adapted to express a new mood, rather than an alien tradition arbitrarily grafted."<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. The Avestan Concept of the Saošyant

In the Avesta it is not the highest god, Ahura Mazdā, who himself fights and overcomes Evil, but his "soldiers" or "messengers," persons called *saošiiant-*. These Saošyants form an integral part of and play an important and decisive role in Zoroaster's religious and teleological concept of the world history directed towards the utter annihilation of Evil and the restoration of Ahura Mazdā's good and perfect creation. Elsewhere<sup>22</sup> I have argued that in the oldest parts of the Avesta, the Gathas, *saošiiant-*, even when used in the singular, denotes a member of a group of people following Zoroaster's religion: the Saošyants fight evil during their lifetime and are characterized by an exemplary good "(religious) view" (Av. *daēnā-*). This meaning is continued in the Younger Avesta, but alongside a newly evolved concept in which hopes concentrate on a single Saošyant characterized by the epithet "victorious" (Av. *vərəθrajan-*). He, the "victorious one among the Saošyants" (*saošiiantəm vərəθrajan-* Yt 19.89), is expected to bring about the utter and final defeat of Evil. This single Saošyant is conceived of as not only utterly defeating Evil but also as ushering in a new age. He is the one who brings about the Renovation of the world, Av. *frašō.kərati-*, in which Ahura Mazdā's good and perfect creation is restored and freed from all Evil. On this Victorious Saošyant the religious hopes are increasingly concentrated, so that he becomes the Saošyant

20 Cf. Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 509 and 514f.; Ed. Mayer, *Ursprünge und Anfänge des Christentums* II 111–5.

21 Shaked, *Cambridge History of Judaism* I 323. Cf. also the remarks by Hinnells, *Numen* 16, 1969, 179: "... the effect of the influence has not been to introduce a new or alien idea, but rather to develop and modify... existing concepts." On what is meant by "influence" see Hinnells, *JCOI* 45, 1976, 7–15. Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 1979, 520 makes the methodological remark that "Das Auftauchen oder die Entwicklung neuer Vorstellungen innerhalb einer Religion sind auf fremden Einfluß zurückzuführen, wenn diese Vorstellungen für eine andere, demselben Kulturgebiet angehörige Religion kennzeichnend sind und zugleich früher bezeugt werden können."

22 Hintze, "The Rise of the Saviour in the Avesta." *Festschrift Werner Sundermann*, Wiesbaden 1995.



par excellence, and by the time of the Pahlavi texts his title has become his proper name Sōšyans.

In one of the Younger Avestan hymns it is stated that it is he who will raise the dead with his gaze and render the whole corporeal world undecaying and indestructible. Supported by his companions he will fight and win a great final battle between the forces of Good and Evil. In this struggle, all evil creatures, such as e.g. Aka Manah, Aēšma ('rage'), and Angra Mainyu himself, will be completely defeated and in the end Angra Mainyu will be rendered powerless so that never again will he be able to come back and harm Ahura Mazdā's good creation. Thus all Evil will finally be removed from Ahura Mazdā's universe. Together with evil creatures, all those unpleasant products which came into being through Evil — as for instance, hunger, thirst, old age, decay and death — will also be removed.

This is the content of the eight final stanzas of the Zamyād Yašt (Yt 19), and these stanzas contain the most detailed description of eschatological events found in the Avesta. The Zamyād Yašt is one of the older hymns of the Younger Avesta. Although all attempts at dating any Avestan text are uncertain, this hymn may be attributed, on the basis of relative chronology, to the seventh or sixth century B.C.E.<sup>23</sup> Its religious content, of course, may be even older.

In the Younger Avestan passages which tell about this final Saviour, a myth has been combined with the expectation of the coming final world saviour. It is believed that he will come from the region of the Haētumat river in Sīstān. He is the son of *Vīspa.tauruuairī*, about whom the Pahlavi sources tell that she, being a virgin, became pregnant by the prophet Zaratustra's seed while bathing in Lake Kāsaoya, his seed being kept in that lake and guarded by the 'guardian spirits' (*Av. frauuaši-*).<sup>24</sup> The Younger Avestan myth of the Victorious Saošyant has traces of a deliberate development: the Saošyant's name, *Astuuat.ərəta*, was probably created by Zoroastrian theologians of the Younger Avestan period on the basis of the Gathic passage Y 43,16 *astuuat ašəm xiiāi uštānā + aojōnhuuat* "truth may be corporeal, strong through vitality."<sup>25</sup> *Astuuat.ərəta* brandishes a missile borne by other heroes before him, especially Thraētaona when he slew the dragon Dahāka. This is the weapon with which he will drive out Falsehood from the world of Truth. Moreover, in the article mentioned above (fn. 23) I have tried to show that the myth of the "victorious" Saošyant contains elements of the tradition of heroic epic and myth. The Avestan words used in connection with the description of *Astuuat.ərəta*'s weapon belong to the terminology of the Indo-European myth of the hero killing a dragon (*Av. aži-* "snake, serpent, dragon," *jan-* "to slay, kill"). Furthermore, the corresponding Vedic adjective *vṛtra-hán-* is used especially as the epithet of Indra, the Vedic hero who slays the dragon whose name became *Vṛtra* in the Indian tradition.<sup>26</sup> Thus the use of the adjective *vərəθra-jan-* as the Saošyant's epithet

23 On the date of this hymn see Hintze, *Der Zamyād-Yašt* 40–45.

24 See on this Boyce, *History* I 282.

25 Cf. on this passage Narten, *Der Yasna Haptanḥāiti*. Wiesbaden 1986, 181 fn.51. On the name *Astuuat.ərəta*, cf. Hintze, *Zamyād-Yašt* 371–2 with references.

26 E. Benveniste/L. Renou, *Vṛtra et Vṛθraṇa*. Étude de mythologie indo-iranienne. Paris 1934 (Cahiers de la société asiatique 3). Cf. also below n. 50.



may be considered as a relic from the heroic tradition of the dragon-killer. Finally, the Avestan word *saošiiaṇt-* itself contains the verbal root *sū* "to be strong," Vedic *śū*, from which the noun *sūra-* "hero" is also derived. In the Indo-Iranian myth this noun seems to have particularly denoted the hero who kills a dragon. Thus it seems that in the Younger Avestan period the ancient myth of the hero killing a dragon was reinterpreted in a religious way as a particular visual and popular image for the Saošyant overcoming Evil, that is to say Angra Mainyu and all his creatures.

Closely connected with the final defeat of Evil, and a necessary corollary to it, is the resurrection of the dead which means the victory of life over death.<sup>27</sup> Resurrection shows that Ahura Mazdā is stronger than his antagonist Angra Mainyu. In the Zoroastrian concept of eschatological events resurrection is closely linked with the defeat of Evil brought about by the Saošyant.

### 5. The Eschatological Messiah in Judaism

In Jewish belief the three elements: a final saviour, a final struggle between Good and Evil, and resurrection of the dead do not become prominent before the post-exilic period, since "Israel's religion did not originally have an eschatology. It was pre-eminently a religion of life in this world, realistic, sturdy, and robust," as Sigmund Mowinckel has characterized the ancient Israelite faith.<sup>28</sup> The main locus of contacts between Jews and Mazdayasnians has been convincingly described by Shaul Shaked as being Persia and Babylonia, "where Jews lived among a predominantly Persian population."<sup>29</sup> The Jews from the Diaspora are likely to have brought the new ideas into Palestine.

The emphasis in the notion of the Zoroastrian victorious Saošyant lies in his overcoming the evil powers, resurrecting the dead and introducing a new era where there is no evil. In Judaism, too, it is characteristic of the eschatological Messiah that his arrival is connected both with the utter and final defeat of Evil and with the resurrection of the dead.<sup>30</sup> The earliest attestations of the Messiah in the sense of an eschatological ruler are found in the apocalyptic literature of Hellenistic Judaism. The eschatological king is mentioned in the third book of the Sibylline Oracles 3.652ff. (ca. 150 B.C.E.)<sup>31</sup> and in the Dream Visions of the Ethiopic Book

27 Cf. Hinnells, *JCOI* 45, 1976, 6: "resurrection is the victory over death, the work of evil."

28 *He That Cometh* 130. Cf. also Werblowsky's remarks concerning messianism among Jews of the Diaspora living under Christian dominion: "As a rule, Jewish messianism never relinquished its concrete, historical, national, and social expectations and was little impressed by the 'spiritual' character of Christian doctrines" (*The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.9, 1987, 474).

29 *Cambridge History of Judaism* I 324f. Cf. Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 480f.; Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 1979, 516. Hinnells, *Numen* 16, 1969, 179–185 draws attention to the possibility of later direct influence of Zoroastrianism on Christianity which "may be important in the case of the Book of Revelation."

30 Cf. Hinnells, *Numen* 16, 1969, 179.

31 Sib. Or. 3.652–656: "And then God will send a King from the Sun who will stop the entire earth from evil war, killing some, imposing oaths of loyalty on others; and he will not do all



of Enoch 90.37, composed approximately a decade earlier.<sup>32</sup> A more detailed description of the Messiah is found in Psalm 17 and 18 of Solomon dating from the first century B.C.E. Here, also, in PsSol. 17.21ff., the Messiah denotes the earthly national king towards whom the Jewish future hope is directed; the emphasis on the notion of the national Messiah lies in his being the king (βασιλεύς) of Israel. Thus, in these passages the national and political Messiah of Israel has become an eschatological ruler at the end of time. But the resurrection of the dead is not mentioned in these passages and therefore they do not exhibit any other characteristic eschatological traits.

An eschatological Messiah is found in the Parables of the Ethiopic book of Enoch 48.10 and 52.4, dating from the first century C.E.<sup>33</sup> Here it is described how the rulers of the earth are decisively defeated by the elect people of God, because "they have denied the Lord of the Spirits, his Anointed One" (Enoch 48.10). Then the dead will rise and a wonderful era will begin under the rule of the Anointed One (Enoch 51). In IV Ezra 13 (late first century C.E.) there is an account of how the final Saviour rises up from the sea and slays an innumerable army of hostile people with a stream of fire issuing from his mouth; afterwards he assembles peaceful people around himself. The end of the world is also described in chapter 10 of the Assumptio Mosis as the final struggle of Good and Evil.<sup>34</sup> Although a Messiah is not mentioned in this apocalypse, God has his messenger, an angel whom he sends to fight his enemies (Ass. Mosis 10.2).

these things by his private plans but in obedience to the noble teachings of the great God" (J.J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles", in: Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I 376). Then all the enemies of Israel will be defeated, but 'the sons of the great God' will dwell around the temple in peace (3.702) and all people will recognize the 'immortal king, the great eternal God' and he will raise up an eschatological kingdom of peace for all (3.767-795). According to Collins, *ibid.* fn.x<sup>3</sup> the 'King from the Sun' would be the Egyptian king. On the date of this text see Collins, *ibid.* 355 (: 163-145 B.C.E.). — One single kingdom and one single language spoken by all people characterize part of the eschatological kingdom described by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 17: ἓνα βίον καὶ μίαν πολιτείαν ἀπάντων γενέσθαι.

32 The "Book of Dream Visions" constitutes chapters 83-90 of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch and was composed in the midst of the wars of Judas Maccabeus (died 160 B.C.E.). It was written some years after the Book of Daniel and is one of the oldest Jewish apocalypses, see D. Flusser, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* vol.11, Jerusalem 1971, 1409; vol.14, 1198-9.

33 On the date see E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch." In: Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I 7.

34 Ass. Mosis 10.2: "Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation. Then the evil will have an end. Yea, sorrow will be led away with him. Then will be filled the hands of the messenger, who is in the highest place appointed. Yea, he will at once avenge them of their enemies. For the Heavenly One will arise from his kingly throne. Yea, he will go forth from his holy habitation with indignation and wrath on behalf of his sons" (J. Priest in: Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* I 931-2). Cf. on this passage Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 287.



## 6. The Eschatological Role of the Dragon

The resurrection of the dead is merely the logical consequence of the enemy's defeat, since death cannot prevail over life created by God, but life has to overcome death. It is the Messiah who inaugurates these events, although it is not always he who raises the dead, but sometimes God himself.<sup>35</sup> In Daniel 12.1–3, a judgement is implied by the reference to some waking "to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt."<sup>36</sup> The prophecy in chapters 24–27 of Isaiah, which dates from the third or second century B.C.E., also speaks of the resurrection to come in order to re-establish Israel. Here the other, non-Jewish people are invited to life in eternal bliss as well (Is.27.13). The Lord "will swallow up death in victory" (Is.25.8) and the dead will rise (Is.26.19).

The resurrection is connected here with the myth of Leviathan: "On that day the Lord will punish with his sword, which is hard and great and strong, Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, and Leviathan, the tortuous serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea" (Is.27.1).<sup>37</sup> Here, in the story of the Leviathan slain by Yahweh himself, a dragon plays a role in the eschatological struggle. Also in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 29.4 (early 2nd cent. C.E.) at the coming of the Messiah, Leviathan, here together with Behemoth, another mythical monster, rises out of the sea. Both creatures are said to have been preserved until the time when the Messiah comes in order to serve as food for those who are left.<sup>38</sup> In the following

35 Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 274 maintains that resurrection would be performed by God and that the Messiah would play no role in this. This is in contradiction to Enoch 51.3, if the "Elected One" who resurrects the dead and judges them is the Messiah as Beer, in Kautzsch, *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* II, 265 n.i., assumes. — In the Old Testament, resurrection of the dead is first found in Ezekiel 37.1–10, where it is implied that their bones may be joined together again. But from the following interpretation of the vision, Ez.37.11–14, it emerges that it is not eschatological at all, since resurrection of the dead is only theoretically considered as a possible extraordinary means of showing Israel that Yahweh is her lord: it is a picture of the restoration of Israel and part of the future, national hope and promise, cf. W. Eichrodt, *Der Prophet Hesekiel*. Göttingen 1966 (*Das Alte Testament Deutsch* 22), 353–8; Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 269 fn.1.; Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 544 with fn.160; Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 1972, 18. Egyptian influence has been thought of here by M. Görg, in: *Neues Bibellexikon*, ed. by M. Görg/B. Lang, vol.I, Zürich 1991, 200.

36 Revised Standard Version. The new element here is that the sinners will also arise in order to be punished for the way that they lived, cf. Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 542.

37 Translation by Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* 103, except for *tannin* which he translates by "crocodile." On the meaning of *tannin* see G.R. Driver, "Mythological Monsters in the Old Testament." In: *Studi orientalistici in onore di G. Levi della Vida*, Roma 1956, I 243–8. Cf also below under 7.

38 "And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Anointed One will begin to be revealed. And Behemoth will reveal itself from its place, and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation and which I shall have kept until that time. And they will be nourishment for all who are left" (F.J. Klijn, "(Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch." In: Charlesworth



section, Syr. Bar. 30, at the completion of the Messiah's coming, the resurrection takes place and the souls of the just will be of one mind, for each of them knows that the end of time has come. By contrast, those of the unjust will perish from fear, for they realise that the time of their punishment has arrived.

A dragon who is to be defeated in the course of the eschatological events plays a role also in chapter 20.1–3 of the Apocalypse of St. John: The "old dragon" (ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, 20.1) is identified with Satan, the Devil. The angel comes down from heaven having the key to the abyss, the underworld, and a chain in his hands in order to fetter the dragon. The angel throws the dragon into the abyss and locks it there for a thousand years to protect the other creatures from his deceits.<sup>39</sup> Then the dragon is freed again for a short time (μετὰ ταῦτα δεῖ λυθῆναι αὐτὸν μικρὸν χρόνον, 20.3) so that it may take part in the great final struggle in which it is decisively defeated. The two types of Messianic expectation, the Jewish national hope and the eschatological universal one, are combined in the image of the Messianic kingdom on earth lasting for a thousand years, and described in Rev. 20.4–6.<sup>40</sup> Then comes the judgement, and death is thrown into the lake of fire (20.10). There is a new heaven and a new earth (21.1), in which will be no more death, suffering or pain (21.4). Thus, here, too, the defeat of the dragon is connected with judgement, resurrection of the dead and the beginning of a new era in which death and all other evil are no more<sup>41</sup>.

(ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I, 1983, 630). On the date of the Syriac Baruch cf. Klijn, *ibid.* 616f. On the tradition that Leviathan has become the food of God's people cf. H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, 1978, 1002.

39 Cf. Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 538. Similarly 1 Enoch 10.4–6: Raphael binds Azaz'el and throws him into a hole in the desert, where covered by sharp and rugged rocks he must stay until the great judgement in order to be thrown into the abyss of fire. In 1 Enoch 54.1–6 the hordes of Azaz'el are bound with iron chains of immense weight and thrown into the burning abyss of complete condemnation. And on the "great day of judgement they will be cast into the furnace of fire" by the angels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Phanuel, because they served Satan and led astray the people on the earth (Isaac in Charlesworth (ed.), *Pseudepigrapha* I 17 and 38).

40 E. Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*. In: *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, vpl.IV, Göttingen 1968, 100f.: "In dieser Erwartung des Zwischenreiches sind zwei verschiedene Formen eschatologischer Hoffnung miteinander verbunden worden. Nach der älteren Vorstellung sollte der Messias als endzeitlicher König kommen, der das Reich Davids wiederherstellen und Israel zu herrlichem Glanz emporführen wird. In der Apokalyptik aber bildete sich daneben eine ganz andere Auffassung von der zukünftigen Heilszeit aus: Vom Himmel wird der göttliche Gesandte, der Menschensohn, erscheinen, bei seiner Ankunft werden die Toten auferstehen und alle Menschen vor seinen Richterstuhl treten müssen. Die ältere nationale Hoffnung suchte man später mit der universalen Eschatologie zu verknüpfen, indem das Reich des Messias Königs vor das Ende der Welt und den Anbruch des neuen Äons gesetzt wurde." The eschatological Messiah shares many traits with the Iranian Victorious Saošyant, the messenger of Ahura Mazdā (Yt 19.92).

41 Furthermore, in the Avesta the Saošyant is described as the "messenger" (*ašta-*) of Ahura Mazdā (Yt 19.92). In the myth related in the book of Revelation it is also the angel (Gk. ἄγγελος 'messenger') who binds the dragon, and also in the Assumptio Mosis 10.2 where God has his messenger, his angel, whom he sends to fight the enemies. A messenger of Yahweh is first



Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 516 has drawn a parallel between the myth from the Book of Revelation 20.1–3 and one known from the Avesta and Pahlavi literature: the dragon Dahāka,<sup>42</sup> an incarnation of Evil, already mentioned above in connection with the weapon of the Saošyant *Astuuat.ərətā*, is overcome by the hero Thraētaona (Pahl. Frēdōn). In the Avestan sources the dragon is killed by Thraētaona, but in the Pahlavi ones it is said that the hero only fettered the dragon and bound him at Mount Demawend<sup>43</sup> until the renovation of the world when the hero Kirsāsp will arise and slay him: Bd 29.9, K 20 fol.123r.19 — fol.123v. 1<sup>44</sup>: *dh<sup>3</sup>k MNW bywr<sup>2</sup>sp KRYTWNd ZNH-c YMLLWN<sup>2</sup>t (20) [<sup>2</sup>Y]K prytwn<sup>2</sup> MT-š dh<sup>3</sup>k BR<sup>2</sup> HDWNt pt kwštn' (1) L<sup>2</sup> š<sup>2</sup>yyst<sup>2</sup> P-š<sup>2</sup> HR pt<sup>45</sup> kw p Y dwm<sup>2</sup>wnd<sup>46</sup> BR<sup>2</sup> bst /Dahāg kē Bēwarasp hwanēnd ēn-iz gōwād (gōwēd?) kū Frēdōn ka-š Dahāg be grift pad kuštan nē šāyest u-š pas pad kōf i Dumāwand be bast/* "Of Dahāg, whom they call Bēwarasp, this, too, it says, that Frēdōn when he captured Dahāg was not able to kill him, and afterwards bound him at Mount Demāwand." When the dragon is unfettered, Kirsāsp arises, smites and slays him. The story is told in more detail in Denkard 9.21.8–10. In contrast with the passage in the Bundahišn just quoted, here it is not said that Frēdōn was not able to kill the dragon, which would not be very honourable for a hero, but that after striking Dahāg with his club upon its shoulder, heart and even skull the dragon did not die. Then Frēdōn took his sword and hacked at it with three blows. But various kinds of noxious creature came out of its body so that the creator Ohrmazd, fearing that the earth would become full of serpents, toads, scorpions, lizards, tortoises, and frogs asked Frēdōn to stop and bind the dragon with awful fetters and imprison it.<sup>47</sup> Then at the coming of the

mentioned in Malachi 3.1–6 and in this context the fire ordeal is alluded to. Here already Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*<sup>4</sup> 513 fn.1 has noticed a Persian affinity.

42 The material on Aži Dahāka has been gathered and discussed in a masterly article by Skjærvø, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III, 1989, 191–9.

43 Cf. West, *SBE* 5, Oxford 1880, repr. Delhi 1977, 119. This story is also related in Denkard 8.13.8–9; 9.15.2 (: "and for that which happens when owing to confinement, Dahāg becomes eager, rushes on for the destruction of the world, and attempts the annihilation of the creatures; when he (Kirsāsp) is roused to smite him, and to tame that powerful fiend for the world and creatures," West, *SBE* 37, 1892, 198–9); Ayātkār i Jāmāspik 4.28. Cf. Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19.1, 539; Skjærvø, *Encycl.Iran.* III, 1989, 196.

44 DH 216v ff., TD1: 83v17–84r10; Anklesaria 254.

45 From the preposition /pad/, attested in DH but missing in K20, it emerges that the idea is that Azdahāg was fettered at Mount Demawend. It may be assumed that the dragon was tethered inside the crater of the volcanic Mount Demawend. The story could well be an etiological tale explaining volcanic eruptions.

46 The form *dwm<sup>2</sup>wnd* has developed from a more archaic *dwnb<sup>2</sup>wnd*, as the name of the mountain is spelled in the trilingual Šāpūr-inscription from the third century C.E. and in literary works, as e.g. sometimes in the Bundahišn, cf. Eilers, "Der Name Demawend." *Archiv Orientalní* 22, 1954, 267ff., 285 with fn.133; *Geographische Namengebung in und um Iran*. München 1982, 43.

47 Cf. West, *SBE* 37, 1892, 214.



second Saošyant,<sup>48</sup> the hero Kirsāsp is resurrected and finally slays the dragon,<sup>49</sup> while at the coming of Sōšyans, the third Saošyant, resurrection of the dead takes place. The description of these events forms the final section of the Bahman Yašt, where it is recounted that nine thousand years after the death of Frēdōn, Ahriman full of hatred goes to Mount Demāwand and shouts to Bēwarasp (= Azdahāg) that he should rise up and come out into this world full of people. The dragon, being unable to loosen the fetters and still fearing that Frēdōn might appear again, is freed by Ahriman. After the fetters are removed, Azdahāg's vigour and impetuosity increase tremendously. First it swallows Ahriman, and then rushes into the world to perpetrate sin and swallow one-third of mankind, cattle, sheep, and other creatures of Ohrmazd; and it smites water, fire, and vegetation. Afterwards, the water, fire, and vegetation stand before Ohrmazd the lord in lamentation and ask him to make Frēdōn alive again so that he might destroy Azdahāg; otherwise the fire could not heat, and the water could not flow. And then Ohrmazd the creator asks Srosh and the angel Neryosang to go to the hero Kirsāsp and shake his body until he rises up. Three times they utter a cry, and the fourth time Kirsāsp rises up triumphantly, and goes to meet Azdahāg. Azdahāg asks for mercy, but the hero does not listen, and strikes the dragon with his club on the head, and kills it. With the killing of Azdahāg evil is removed from this world and a new millennium starts. Then Sōšyans comes and makes the creatures pure again, the resurrection takes place, and future existence begins.<sup>50</sup>

The similarities between these two stories are so striking that the myth alluded to in the Book of Revelation may have been developed on an Iranian model.<sup>51</sup>

A parallel to the Iranian dragon Aži Dahāka has also been recognized in the horrible fourth animal described in Daniel 7.7–28, whose cruel reign is brought to an end with the coming of the "Son of Man."<sup>52</sup> The animal is killed and its body thrown into the fire (Daniel 7.11ff.). Although here it is the "old man" who annihilates the monster, the passage contains a parallel to the Iranian myth in so far as the annihilation of the dragon immediately precedes the coming of the "Son of Man" who ushers in a new age and whose rule has no end (Daniel 7.13–14,

48 On the triplication of the Saošyant see Boyce, *History* I 284ff., 290ff., II 242f.; *BSOAS* 47, 1984, 67f.

49 *Pahl.Riv.Dd.* 18f25, ed. A.V. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 2 Parts, Copenhagen 1990, cf. *ibid.* II p.161ff. with references. The myth of the dragon here is Iranian, not Babylonian, as Bousset 516 thinks, and inherited from the Indo-European period, cf. C. Watkins, "How to kill a Dragon in Indo-Europaen." *Studies in Memory of Warren Cowgill*, ed. by C. Watkins, Berlin/New York 1987, 270–299. On the legend of Kərəsāspa Boyce, *History* I 100–4.

50 B. T. Anklesaria, (ed. and tr.) *Zand-ī Vohūman Yasn and Two Pahlavi Fragments*. Bombay 1919 [1957], chap IX, 14–23; cf West, *SBE* 5, 1880, 234–5; Cereti 1995.

51 Although the Pahlavi books date only from the ninth century c.e., the material contained in them is much older, cf. e.g. Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 517f.

52 Cf. Ed. Meyer, *Ursprünge und Anfänge des Christentums* vol.II, Stuttgart/Berlin 1924 (repr. Darmstadt 1962), 199; A. von Gall, *BAΣΛΕΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ*, Heidelberg 1926, 267, cf. Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 1979, 532f. fn.98.



27).<sup>53</sup> Also in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 39 a "fourth kingdom" is described, whose cruel reign is put an end to by the Messiah (39.7). The last ruler of this cruel kingdom is fettered, taken to Mount Zion, questioned by the Lord's Messiah about all his evil deeds, and killed by the Messiah (40.1). Then the elect people will be assembled around the Messiah and his rule will last until the end of this world (40.1–3). Although here the Messiah is the desired political, national king of Israel, the vision contains elements of the eschatological myth.

Thus we find the dragon not only in the Avestan and Pahlavi descriptions of the Renovation of the world, but also in the Jewish and Christian sources.

### 7. Semitic *tannīn* "monster" in Pahlavi?

In Is.27.1 Leviathan is also called *tannīn* "sea monster."<sup>54</sup> In Ugaritic mythology, too, Leviathan (here: *Lōtan*) is described as *tnn* with the same epithets as Leviathan in Is.27.1.<sup>55</sup> Skjærvø<sup>56</sup> remarks that the Arabic equivalent of Hebrew *tannīn* is used by Ibn an-Nadīm in a Manichaean context in his description of the Evil Spirit.<sup>57</sup> Also in Manichaean texts one of Ahriman's physical forms is that of a dragon (*tannīn*).<sup>58</sup> But the references to two possible attestations of the Semitic *tannīn* in Pahlavi, possibly even referring to Azdahāg, are unfortunately very uncertain: A form \**TNYN* /*tannīnā*/ has been restored by Henning, "Two Manichaean Magical Texts," *BSOAS* 12, 1947, 42 (= *SelPap.* II 276) from a transmitted form 𐭥𐭥𐭥𐭥 *TNN* (vel sim.) in Pahl.Riv.Dd.9.3 (= Dhabhar p.22, line 10). The context is the description of the merit of religious services, especially of the *drōn* service. It is said that the spirit of the *drōn* is able to fight Ahriman and the demons of darkness and he strikes them into the earth *cygwn* 𐭥𐭥𐭥𐭥 *bškw* "like a ... griffin."<sup>59</sup> Since

53 On the interpretation of the "Son of Man" in this passage and the origin of the image cf. Hultgård, *ibid.* 535f.

54 Is.27.1: הָרַג תַּנִּין "he killed the sea monster," L. Koehler/W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, vol.IV, 3rd edition rev. by J.J. Stamm, Leiden 1990, 1624; W.H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*. *WMANT* 17, 1967, 122. This word for "dragon" is well attested in Semitic languages, including Mandaic, see E.S. Drower/R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary*. Oxford 1963, 480.

55 Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja* 13–27, 1978, 1002; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* 107 with fn.78.

56 Skjærvø, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III, 1989, 198.

57 *Fehrest*, transl. by B. Dodge, New York/London 1970, II 778.

58 H.J. Polotsky/ B. Böhlig (eds.), *Kephalaia*. Erste Hälfte (Manichäische Handschriften den Staatlichen Museen, Bd.I). Stuttgart 1940, p.30.33–31.2 (reference kindly provided by Professor W. Sundermann).

59 /*baškuč*/ is translated as "griffin" by Bailey, *Zor.Probl.*, 2nd ed. xxxiii, MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, London 1971, 17 (: "gryphon"), and Boyce, *A Word List of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*. Teheran/Liège. 1977, 74 (: Man. MPers. *pšqwc*). The rendering of this very rare word as "griffin" or "monster like a griffin" is based on a series of words in other languages such as e.g. Armenian *paskuč* which translates γρύψ of the Septuagint, see Henning, *BSOAS* 12, 1947, 41–43 (= *SelPap.* II 275–7). However, in all languages except Pahlavi, even in Man.MPers., the initial consonant of the word is a voiceless *p*-, of which

H. Hintze, *Ancient & Middle Persian Studies*, 2000, 339–343.



*bškw* appears to be a hapax legomenon in Pahlavi, and its relationship to Man. MPers. *pšqwc* is phonetically not clear, it represents a second "unknown" in this passage. If the meaning "griffin" for *bškw* could be assured, it would be conceivable to find in 𐭮𐭥𐭥 with Bailey<sup>60</sup> the Aramaic *tannīn* collocated with a winged fabulous animal. In that case the whole expression would denote a "dragon-griffin." The last line of PRDd 9.3 (= 22.10–11) should then be translated: "like a dragon-griffin he smites these Devs to the ground and like hail when it bounces on the ground." In order to support this interpretation, we would need to find other attestations of the collocation of *TNN*<sup>2</sup> (or: <sup>+</sup>*TNYN*<sup>2</sup>) with *bškw*. But even so, the question would arise as to how the Semitic word for "monster" could be used as an image for an ahuric being such as the *mēnōg* of the *drōn*. A similar problem is encountered with the second alleged attestation of */tannīnā/*.

In the second passage, Dēnkard (Madan) p.816.13, the context is the story of Kai Us' attempt to storm the sky. Aēšm approaches him and persuades him not to be content with his kingdom of the seven climes but to long to rule over the archangels and the kingdom of endless light, the heavenly regions. Accompanied by Aēšm and a host of Dēvs, Kai Us starts to oppose and molest the sacred beings, to climb Mount Alburz, and to try to rush upwards from there towards the sky, accompanied by Dēvs and wicked people. At that moment, when he tries to enter the region of endless light, his Kayanian Xwarrah takes a shape described in the following words: *ky<sup>2</sup>n GDH 𐭮𐭥𐭥 (TYN<sup>2</sup>?) krp' YHWWNt' /kayān xwarrah ... ? karb būd/* 'the *xwarrah* of the Kavis was a form of ...'. 𐭮𐭥𐭥 has been interpreted as *TYN*<sup>2</sup> */gil/* "clay" by West.<sup>61</sup> Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, 1943, 30 conjectured *TBY*<sup>2</sup> */āhūk/* "gazelle," but doubtfully *TNYN*<sup>2</sup> "monster of the sea" in the second edition of 1971, p.xxxiii. But *xwarrah*, assuming the shape of a "monster", does not seem convincing, although one is reminded of the story of Yima whose *x<sup>2</sup>arānah* took the shape of a bird of prey when it left him because he had started to lie (so in the Avesta) or become full of hubris (so in Firdausi). The usual interpretation of *TYN*<sup>2</sup> as */gil/* may make sense in so far as it could mean that at the moment when Kai Us made bad use of his power and became full of hubris, the *xwarrah* lost its shine and splendour. In the following passage it is told that Ohrmazd took away the *xwarrah* from Kai Us.

The contexts of the two passages are completely different, and the forms actually attested are also different: in PRDd 9.3 it is 𐭮𐭥𐭥, in DkM 816.13 it is 𐭮𐭥𐭥. In both passages a supposed <sup>+</sup>*TNYN*<sup>2</sup> */tannīnā/* is conjectured. It is very likely,

Henning, *ibid.* 43 (= 277) considers the Pahlavi form with *b-* as a variant; but there is no explanation why the Pahlavi form has an initial *b-*. Williams, *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, 1990, I 62 reads *TWR*<sup>2</sup> */gāw/* "cow," but, referring to an emendation by Henning quoted in an unpublished dissertation on the Pahlavi Rivāyat Dd. from 1942 by H.K. Mirza (*ibid.* I 240), conjectures <sup>+</sup>*bšck* and interprets this as *gāw- baškizag* ("a small cow fly" [*ibid.* I 303]) which seems to involve rather a severe change to the transmitted form.

<sup>60</sup> H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth Century Books*, 2nd ed. Oxford 1971, xxxiii.

<sup>61</sup> West, *SBE* 38, 1892, 222. On the ideogram *TYN*<sup>2</sup> cf. Utas/Nyberg, *Frahang i Pahlavik*, Wiesbaden 1988, chap.II 4.



however, that the form of the Pahlavi Rivāyat and the one in the Dēnkard are two different words and have nothing in common, and so it is better to keep the two attestations apart. The Aramaic *tannīn*, "monster", may possibly be attested in the passage from the Pahlavi Rivāyat, but a better material basis would be necessary for that to be certain. It would have been a very welcome support for the argument of this article, if the Semitic *tannīn* describing e.g. Leviathan were used of Aži Dahāka or Ahriman in the Pahlavi sources, but the evidence of the two Pahlavi passages just quoted is not sufficient.<sup>62</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

The image of the struggle against a dragon is found in Jewish/Christian and Iranian eschatological passages; it may be considered as a parallel in the formulation of the eschatological myth. In Judaism, the old creation myth of the struggle and victory of God over a monster representing the dark, evil, destructive forces as a pre-condition for his good creation was re-interpreted as an eschatological myth in which the victory over the monster became the pre-condition for resurrection of the dead and the beginning of a new era. Certainly, the myth of a god or hero fighting a dragon is a widespread motif also found, for instance, in Babylonian and Canaanite mythology, where the figure of Leviathan probably originated.<sup>63</sup> What is striking, however, is the linking of this myth with eschatology, in particular with the resurrection of the dead and the beginning of a new era free from evil. In the Zoroastrian tradition this was already present in the Old Iranian period and it is very likely that the Jewish/Christian tradition took over this image from the Zoroastrian one in order to formulate its own eschatological myth, for this detail

62 A connection between the Jewish dragon to be slain at the end of time and the Iranian dragon Dahāka may be established in that the big Dragon Dahāka has been located in Babylon within the Zoroastrian tradition, see Skjærvø, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III, 1989, 194. If so, this is a post-Avestan tradition, because western localities are not found in the Avesta, and Yt 5.29 *baβrōiš* hardly denotes Babylon, cf. N. Oettinger's translation "Land des Bibers" (*Untersuchungen zur avestischen Sprache am Beispiel des Ardvī-sūr-Yašt*, unpubl. diss., München 1983, 57), and W. Eilers, *Geographische Namengebung in und um Iran*. München 1982, 15 fn.35. In connection with Dahāg, there also seems to be later Zoroastrian polemic against Judaism, see Skjærvø, *ibid.* 194f., who concludes (*ibid.* 198): "Clearly a large number of elements from different sources, literary and oral, combined to form the various concepts of dragons. These elements and their various connections and interactions, especially those stemming from the Iranian and the Semitic traditions, still have to be investigated in detail."

63 The battle between god and a sea monster forms part of Babylonian creation myths, see A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 1951, 40ff., 102–114. The theme of gods slaying a dragon is already attested on a late third millennium B.C.E. Akkadian seal cylinder depicting gods fighting a sevenheaded dragon, see Heidel, *ibid.* fig.16; E. Fascher, "Drache." In: B. Reicke/L. Rost, *Biblisch-Historisches Handwörterbuch* I, Göttingen 1962, 353; C.H. Gordon, "Leviathan: Symbol of Evil." In: A. Altmann (ed.), *Biblical Motifs. Origins and Transformations*. Cambridge, Mass. 1966, Plate I (opposite p.4).



is not likely to have developed independently in both traditions. It may be considered, therefore, as one of the elements sought by Hultgård, *ANRW* II 19,1, 521 in his attempt to make plausible the case for an interreligious influence: "Für die Beurteilung eines eventuellen Einflusses sollte man darum die Aufmerksamkeit nicht so sehr auf allgemeine Übereinstimmungen richten. Wichtiger ist die Herausarbeitung von charakteristischen Einzelheiten, die sich in einem ähnlichen Kontext finden."

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